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U.S. lawmakers' concerns about mail ballots are fueled by other issues with mail service

By JOHN HANNA
Associated Press

Lawmakers said during a contentious congressional hearing Thursday they are uneasy about the U.S. Postal Service's readiness for a crush of mail ballots for the November election because some of them feel burned by other Postal Service actions. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy sought to reassure a House Appropriations subcommittee that the Postal Service is well-positioned for an extraordinary effort to deliver mail ballots to election officials on time to be counted and that close to 100% will make it promptly.



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U.S. Postal Service trucks park outside a post office in Wheeling, Ill., Monday, Jan. 29, 2024.

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U.S. lawmakers' concerns about mail ballots are fueled by other issues with mail service

Continued from Front

In recent weeks, DeJoy has pushed back on suggestions from state and local election officials that the Postal Service has not addressed problems that led to mail ballots arriving too late or without postmarks, disenfranchising those voters. But as subcommittee members asked DeJoy about how the Postal Service has addressed election officials' concerns, they criticized a larger, 10-year plan to make the mail delivery system more efficient and less costly by consolidating mail processing centers, suggesting it could slow mail delivery, particularly in rural areas. DeJoy disputed that. DeJoy has said repeatedly that the Postal Service's larger plans won't affect the handling of potentially tens of millions of mail ballots for the Nov. 5 election because the plan is on hold for October and the first half of November. But subcommittee Chair David Joyce, an Ohio Republican, told him in opening the hearing that broader



Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, testifies during a House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government oversight hearing on the United States Postal Service's role in Federal election integrity, Thursday, Sep 26, 2024, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

problems with mail delivery are on constituents' minds as the presidential election approaches. "Many of our constituents have expressed concerns about the Postal Service's ability to deliver election ballots securely and on time,"

Joyce said. "It is imperative that the Postal Service get this right." DeJoy told the lawmakers that the Postal Service's 650,000 employees will be sifting through 300 million pieces of mail to capture stray ballots and ensure they arrive on

time. DeJoy said the Postal Service has improved its training and touted a year-round task force he created to deal with mail ballot issues. "We do everything we possibly can in an imperfect system that expects the perfect, and we're a good target for a lot of blame," DeJoy said. DeJoy said that nearly 99.9% of the mail ballots from the 2020 election were delivered within seven days, the "recommended commonsense time frame." Asked whether people can trust mail ballots, DeJoy said, "Absolutely, absolutely." Scrutiny of the Postal Service intensified earlier this month when the National Association of Secretaries of State and National Association of State Election Directors sent DeJoy a letter saying that their concerns weren't being adequately addressed, releasing it to news organizations. DeJoy said he's had a good working relationship with them. But Joyce said that in Ohio's Nov. 7, 2023, election, when voters approved an amendment to the state constitution protecting abortion rights, some ballots mailed by voters on Oct. 24 did not arrive until Nov. 21 — 10 days too late to be counted. DeJoy said he would need to learn the specifics.

Democratic Rep. Matt Cartwright of Pennsylvania, a key swing state in the presidential election, pointed to an end-of-July report from the Postal Service's inspector general saying that in some places, Postal Service workers weren't following its procedures for handling mail ballots. "We're doing very well at this — just not perfect," DeJoy said. He said the inspector general's office "has a couple hundred people" to investigate potential problems and "interrogate our people." Though the subcommittee said it was examining issues about mail ballots, several members used the hearing to air other issues that trouble them, particularly the larger plan to reorganize the mail delivery system. DeJoy said the Postal Service has embarked on long-overdue investments in "ratty" facilities and making other changes to create "a Postal Service for the future" and deliver mail faster. But lawmakers in several states have argued that mail delivery slowed after regional hubs were consolidated. Democratic Rep. Mark Pocan, of Wisconsin, suggested that a pilot program consolidating some mail processing in Green Bay, Wisconsin, had failed and said the larger reorganization should remain on hold "forever." DeJoy said a pilot program allowed a test of potential changes and problems are being addressed after telling Pocan, "You know, the first rockets that went to the moon blew up." Pocan shot back: "Thanks for blowing up Wisconsin." Cartwright expressed concern about a potential slowdown of rural mail delivery. DeJoy suggested the Postal Service was a financial and operational mess when he became postmaster general in 2020 and badly needed fixing, but Cartwright said, "You really think that rural Americans should have to pay the price?" DeJoy responded: "I disagree with the premise, and I think it's an unfair accusation, considering the condition that the Postal Service has been allowed to get to." □

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Glock pistols are popular among criminals because they're easily modified, report says

By LEA SKENE

Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — Glock pistols are a popular choice for people committing gun crimes, in part because they can be easily converted into fully automatic weapons using a small device, according to a new report based on data from nearly three dozen U.S. cities.

Often called Glock switches or auto sears, the devices have received heightened attention in recent years because they're increasingly turning up at crime scenes. They effectively turn semiautomatic weapons, which fire one bullet per trigger pull, into machine guns that can spray continuous gunfire.

Authorities believe the shooters who killed four people and injured 17 others in Birmingham, Alabama, last weekend were using conversion devices to make their guns more powerful. About 100 shell casings were recovered from the scene.

A report by the anti-violence organization Everytown for Gun Safety says criminals often choose Glocks because they're relatively cheap and easy to operate and modify. But the brand is perhaps best known for its popularity among law enforcement officers, who almost exclusively carry Glock hand-



A semi-automatic pistol with a conversion device installed making it fully automatic is fired as four empty shell casings fly out of the weapon, at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), National Services Center, Thursday, March 2, 2023, in Martinsburg, W.Va.

Associated Press

guns.

The report was released this week ahead of a conference Thursday in Baltimore hosted by Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a group that falls under Everytown's umbrella. The organization called on Glock and other weapons manufacturers to take responsibility for their products and do more to prevent violence.

"We have to build that level of accountability for them as well," Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott said in an interview. "At some point, as a country, the sanctity of

the lives of Americans has to begin to outweigh the sanctity of American guns." A spokesperson for Glock didn't respond to an email seeking comment.

Scott and other mayors said while local elected officials are often at the forefront of pushing for better gun policies, Congress must also step up and address the issue.

Researchers found that four gun manufacturers accounted for over 40% of the recovered guns they studied, with Glock alone accounting for 18%. The

team compiled data from 34 U.S. cities about guns recovered from crime scenes in 2023. "They're basically profiting off of pain," said John Feinblatt, president of Everytown. "They're prioritizing profits over safety." Meanwhile, the prevalence of machine gun conversion devices has increased dramatically 570% between 2017 and 2021, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The devices are banned under federal law. Most are small pieces of metal or plastic made

with a 3D printer or ordered online.

The report also found that recoveries of Polymer80 ghost guns untraceable, unassembled firearms that can be purchased online increased nearly 1,200% across 28 cities over the past five years. Those numbers have started trending downward following the implementation of a new federal rule and a wave of state legislation banning the weapons, according to the report. Polymer80, once a leading manufacturer of ghost guns in the U.S., also shut down operations last month after a deluge of lawsuits.

The city of Baltimore was among those who filed suit. City officials announced a settlement agreement in February after the Nevada-based company agreed to stop selling its products to Maryland residents.

The city's lawsuit accused Polymer80 of intentionally undermining federal and state firearms laws by designing, manufacturing and providing gun assembly kits without serial numbers to buyers who don't undergo background checks. It was filed the same day Maryland's statewide ban on ghost guns went into effect in 2022 following a law change that expanded the definition of a firearm to include "an unfinished frame or receiver." □

Biden signs temporary funding bill that avoids a shutdown before the election

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Thursday signed a temporary government spending bill that keeps agencies operating into December, after Congress punted key spending decisions until after the November election.

The bill generally funds agencies at current levels through Dec. 20, setting up the prospect of a government shutdown fight just before the holiday season. Lawmakers did agree to

add \$231 million to bolster the Secret Service after the two assassination attempts against Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump. Money was also added to aid with the presidential transition.

The measure easily passed Congress on Wednesday on a bipartisan basis, 341-82 in the House and 78-18 in the Senate, with Republicans supplying all the no votes in both chambers.

House Speaker Mike John-

son, R-La., billed the measure as doing "only what's absolutely necessary," a statement directed at members of his own conference concerned about spending levels. Johnson said the only alternative to the continuing resolution at this stage would have been a government shutdown.

The temporary measure was needed because Congress is nowhere close to completing work on the dozen annual appropri-



President Joe Biden meets with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, Thursday, Sept. 26, 2024.

Associated Press

tions bills that fund much of the federal government. The House has passed five

of the 12 bills, mostly along party lines. The Senate has passed zero. □

Louisiana prosecutors drop most serious charge in deadly arrest of Black motorist Ronald Greene

By JIM MUSTIAN
Associated Press

Louisiana prosecutors on Thursday dismissed the most serious remaining charge in the deadly 2019 arrest of Ronald Greene, dropping a negligent homicide count against a veteran trooper seen on body-camera video dragging the Black motorist by his ankle shackles and forcing him to lie face down before he stopped breathing.

The move coming just a month before Kory York's trial marks only the latest withering of a case that began in 2022 with five officers indicted on a range of charges over the stunning, punching and pepper-spraying of Greene following a high-speed chase.

Now, only two still face charges, multiple felony malfeasance counts against York and another officer, all but eliminating the chance that anyone will face significant prison time in a death troopers initially blamed on a car crash.

"This whole thing started with a lie and a coverup and it's going to end the same way," a furious Mona Hardin told The Associated Press when told of the latest dropped charge in her son's death. "You have so much evidence yet no one wants to be the one pointing the finger against killer cops," she said through tears. "They killed my son and no one



This image from video from Louisiana state trooper Lt. John Clary's body-worn camera shows trooper Kory York standing over Ronald Greene on his stomach on May 10, 2019, outside of Monroe, La.

gives a rat's ass." Union Parish District Attorney John Belton said in a statement that even though the grand jury indicted York for negligent homicide, the evidence "does not meet the 'beyond a reasonable doubt' standard necessary to secure a conviction at trial."

Belton also dropped a malfeasance count against the recently retired York that stemmed from authorities' still-unproven suspicion that Greene was pepper-sprayed even after he was handcuffed.

"It's clear to me that the

case should never have been indicted," said York attorney Mike Small, adding he seeks full exoneration of his client at his Oct. 28 trial. "I am confident that once the jury looks at those videos they're not going to see any illegal touching of Ronald Greene by Kory York."

Greene's May 2019 death sparked national outrage and was among several beatings of Black men by Louisiana troopers that prompted the U.S. Justice Department to open an ongoing civil rights investigation into the state police.

But the latest dismissal un-

derscores a weakness in the case that has also discouraged the Justice Department from pursuing charges: After years of investigating, federal and state authorities failed to pinpoint what, exactly, caused Greene's death during the arrest.

State prosecutors were long skeptical the negligent homicide charge would hold up in the face of autopsy reports that cited "complications of cocaine use" among contributing factors to Greene's death. Others included troopers' repeated use of a stun gun, "physical struggle, prone restraint, blunt-force in-

jury and neck compression," but the forensic pathologist in Arkansas who examined Greene declined to identify which factor or factors were most lethal.

The case has been shrouded in secrecy from its outset when state authorities told grieving relatives the 49-year-old died in a car crash at the end of a high-speed chase near Monroe an account questioned immediately by an emergency room doctor who noted Greene's bruised, battered body. Still, a coroner's report listed Greene's cause of death as a motor vehicle accident, a state police crash report omitted any mention of troopers using any force and 462 days passed before the state police even launched an internal investigation.

All the while, officials from then-Gov. John Bel Edwards on down refused to release the body camera video of Greene's arrest. That all changed in 2021 when AP obtained and published the long-suppressed footage showing troopers swarming Greene even as he appeared to raise his hands, plead for mercy and wail, "I'm your brother! I'm scared!"

Troopers repeatedly jolted him with stun guns before he could even get out of the car, with one wrestling him to the ground, putting him in a chokehold and punching him in the face. □

Associated Press

U.S. resumes hazardous waste shipments to Michigan landfill from Ohio

VAN BUREN TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — A federal agency said it has resumed sending hazardous waste to a Michigan landfill from Ohio while communities in suburban Detroit continue their legal fight to bar waste from a World War II-era site in New York.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been sending material from Luckey, Ohio, where beryllium, a toxic metal, was produced for weapons and other uses after World War II.

The effort stopped last week when a Detroit-area



A sign warning of beryllium hangs on a fence at the Luckey FUSRAP (Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program) site, which was designated as such due to beryllium contamination, in Luckey, Ohio, Wednesday, Sept. 11, 2024.

Associated Press

judge signed an order that temporarily freezes plans for the landfill to accept low-level radioactive waste from Lewiston, New York.

Wayne County Judge Kevin Cox amended his order Tuesday to limit the decision to Lewiston and clear up any ambiguity. The next hearings are scheduled for early October.

Wayne Disposal in Van Buren Township, 25 miles (40.23 kilometers) west of Detroit, is one of the few landfills in the U.S. that can handle certain hazardous waste.

"We have resumed safely shipping material" from Ohio to Michigan, said Avery Schneider, an Army Corps spokesman.

Republic Services, which operates the Michigan landfill, said it meets or exceeds rules to safely manage hazardous materials. Nothing has been sent yet to Michigan from New York. Tainted soil in Lewiston is a legacy of the Manhattan Project, the secret government project to develop atomic bombs during World War II. □

Norway issues wanted notice for man connected to exploding pagers in Lebanon

By JAN M. OLSEN and JUS-TIN SPIKE

Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark

(AP) — Norway issued an international wanted notice on Thursday for a man linked to a Bulgaria-based company that may have been involved in the dissemination of exploding electronic devices to the militant Hezbollah group that killed dozens and wounded thousands in Lebanon last week.

The notice is part of a multi-country investigation trying to piece together how thousands of pagers and walkie-talkies were rigged to explode and their trail to Lebanon.

Hezbollah and the Lebanese government have blamed Israel for the coordinated two-day attacks, which killed at least 39 people and wounded more than 3,000, including civilians. Israel has neither confirmed nor denied involvement.

"We have on behalf of the Oslo police sent out an international wanted notice today," Åste Dahle Sundet, a spokeswoman for Norway's National Criminal Investigation Service told The



A police officer inspects a car in which a hand-held pager exploded, in Beirut, Lebanon, Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2024.

Associated Press.

The agency declined to name the man or provide his nationality. All that is known is that he was listed as working for a Norwegian company. Norwegian news agency NTB wrote on Thursday that the 39-year-old man had traveled to the United States last week

but vanished after arriving there. The man was subsequently reported missing on Wednesday, one of Norway's major tabloids VG wrote, citing police.

The CEO of the man's employer, Norway-based DN Group, told the AP in an email that the company had "tried to contact our

employee without success since we first heard the serious allegations about his alleged private activity, which we did not know about and has nothing to do with us as a company." "We haven't heard from him since (last) Wednesday, and we don't know where he is. This worries

us," DN Group CEO Amund Djuve said.

Djuve also did not give the man's name.

The man holds a Norwegian passport and has lived in Norway for 12 years but was born in another country, NTB reported. The news agency described him as one of the founders of the Bulgarian company that was allegedly connected to supplying the pagers to Hezbollah.

The Bulgarian company is not the only firm implicated in the pagers' journey to Lebanon.

Last week, Taiwanese firm Gold Apollo, whose name appeared on the pagers, said it had authorized Budapest, Hungary-based BAC Consulting to use its brand for the devices that exploded, but insisted the Hungarian company was responsible for their manufacturing and design.

Hungary's Special Service for National Security told the AP last week that the CEO of BAC Consulting had been interviewed "several times" as part of an investigation, but that they believed the company had not taken part in rigging the devices to explode. □

Associated Press

North Korea has enough uranium to build a 'double-digit' number of bombs, Seoul's spy agency says

By KIM TONG-HYUNG

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea has likely enriched enough uranium to build a "double-digit" number of bombs and is making progress in its efforts to develop more powerful and accurate missiles targeting rival South Korea, Seoul's spy agency told lawmakers on Thursday. The closed-door parliamentary briefing by the National Intelligence Service came after North Korea offered a rare glimpse into a secretive facility to produce weapons-grade uranium earlier this month as leader Kim Jong Un reiterated his goal to "exponentially" increase his stock of nuclear weapons. The South Korean agency assessed that Kim's disclosure of the facility was likely a statement of defiance toward Washington ahead of the U.S. presidential election and meant to domestically showcase his military accomplishments amid deepening economic struggles, according to Lee Seong-kweun, one of the law-

makers who attended the briefing.

When asked about North Korea's bomb fuel capacity, the agency said North Korea likely has about 70 kilograms (154 pounds) of plutonium and an unspecified but considerable amount of weapons-grade uranium that would be enough to build "at least a double-digit number" of weapons, Lee said.

While North Korean state media did not disclose the location of the uranium enrichment facility that Kim visited on Sept. 13, the South Korean agency said it was likely to be a site in Kangson, near the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, said Park Sun-won, another lawmaker who attended the briefing.

Along with the North's main nuclear complex in the town of Yongbyon, the Kangson plant is one of two known sites in North Korea that has been linked to uranium enrichment activities.

Some analysts say North Korea likely has other hidden sites for enriching uranium. □



This undated photo provided on Sept. 13, 2024, by the North Korean government shows its leader Kim Jong Un, center, on an inspecting visit at what they say is an institute of nuclear weapons and a facility for nuclear materials at an undisclosed location in North Korea. Independent journalists were not given access to cover the event depicted in this image distributed by the North Korean government.

Associated Press

Sudan military offensive sparks new fighting in Khartoum as cholera outbreak worsens

By **FATMA KHALED**

Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — New fighting rocked Sudan's capital on Thursday with airstrikes and drone attacks in and around Khartoum amid a worsening cholera outbreak, officials said.

Sudan's military launched an operation in the early hours of Thursday aimed at taking control of areas in the capital that had been in the hands of its enemy, the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, or RSF. Sudanese media reported increased military movements and airstrikes in the districts of Khartoum and Omdurman, the heaviest in the capital area in months. Mohamed Ibrahim, the health ministry's spokesperson in Khartoum, said in a statement that four civilians were killed and 14 others wounded in the latest fighting in the Karrari district of Omdurman, a city next to the Sudanese capital, Khartoum.

A military spokesman confirmed the operation was underway, but declined to comment further. A military spokesman confirmed the operation was underway, but declined to comment



This grab from video shows smoke rising over Khartoum, Sudan on Thursday Sept. 26, 2024, after Sudan's military started an operation to take areas of the capital from its rival, the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Associated Press

further. The head of Sudan's military, Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, addressed the U.N. General Assembly in New York, saying that "we've done everything we could to put an end to this war and to steer our country from the destruction being waged" by the militia. Jeremy Laurence, a spokesman for the U.N. human rights office in Geneva, said in a statement to The Associated Press Thursday that at least 78 civilians were killed

because of artillery shelling and airstrikes since the beginning of September in the Khartoum area.

"Our immediate concern is for the welfare of civilians, and the likelihood of further displacement and damage to civilian infrastructure," he said.

For months, some of the worst fighting has been in the city of El Fasher, the capital of the North Darfur state. RSF forces have laid siege to the city since May.

On Thursday, U.N. Human Rights Chief Volker Türk said that artillery shelling on a market there had killed at least 20 civilians on Sep. 20 and 21.

Meanwhile, the death toll from Sudan's cholera outbreak jumped by nearly 100 or nearly 20% in only two days, Sudan's health ministry said Wednesday, in a worrying sign that the disease is spreading more rapidly. A total of 473 people have died from cholera

since the country's rainy season began two months ago, health officials said.

Sudan's Federal Ministry of Health in a Wednesday update reported on Facebook 14,944 cholera cases across 10 states, with 386 new cases. It said that six people died on Tuesday alone in six states.

The majority of cases were reported in Kassala, where UNICEF is collaborating with the ministry and the World Health Organization to carry out a second round of the oral cholera vaccination campaign that kicked off last week.

UNICEF delivered 404,000 doses of the vaccine to Sudan on Sep. 9. More vaccination campaigns are expected to be rolled out in other affected states.

Cholera was officially declared an outbreak on August 12 by the health ministry after a new wave of cases was reported starting July 22. The disease is spreading in areas devastated by recent heavy rainfalls and floods, especially in eastern Sudan which sheltered millions of people displaced by the conflict between the Sudanese military and the RSF. □

Taliban who banned women from public spaces say no one faces discrimination in Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) —

The Taliban said Thursday it was absurd to accuse them of gender discrimination and other human rights violations, as four countries vow to hold Afghanistan's rulers accountable under international law for their treatment of women and girls.

Australia, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands are set to start legal proceedings against the Taliban for violating a U.N. convention on women, to which Afghanistan is a party.

The countries launched the initiative on Wednesday on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly, which is taking place in New York until Monday.

Despite promising more moderate rule after they seized power in 2021, the Taliban have barred women and girls from education

beyond sixth grade, many public spaces and most jobs. In August, the Vice and Virtue Ministry issued laws banning women's



A Taliban fighter stands guard as women wait to receive food rations distributed by a humanitarian aid group in Kabul, Afghanistan, Tuesday, May 23, 2023.

Associated Press

bare faces and prohibiting them from raising their voices in public.

More than 20 countries expressed their support Thursday for the proposed legal action against the Taliban.

"We condemn the gross and systematic human rights violations and abuses in Afghanistan, particularly the gender-based discrimination against women and girls," the countries said.

"Afghanistan is responsible under international law for its ongoing gross and systematic violation of numerous obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," they added.


The countries said they did

not politically recognize the Taliban as the legitimate leaders of the Afghan population.


"Afghanistan's failure to fulfill its human rights treaty obligations is a key obstacle to normalization of relations," they said.

The Taliban's deputy spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat said human rights were protected in Afghanistan and that nobody faced discrimination.

"Unfortunately, an attempt is being made to spread propaganda against Afghanistan through the mouths of several fugitive (Afghan) women and misrepresent the situation," he said on social media platform X. □



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Dining in? Try making a local favorite How to make “funchi hasa”

(Oranjestad)—A night in can be just as fun as a night out on the town, especially if you got the right snacks to munch on. One of the most famous Aruban snacks or appetizers is “funchi hasa” (fried polenta sticks). A super easy meal that adults and children will both enjoy. Here's how to make it!

Before we start, get to know the basics

So what is funchi hasa? Funchi, or Aruban polenta, is a popular side dish for local dishes, like soups, stews and fried fish. Made from a corn flour, water and butter mixture, this appetizer is traditionally eaten alongside a warm meal. However, locals also like to fry sticks of funchi for a quick and filling snack.

Ingredients (measured by heart)

1. Polenta flour*
2. Water
3. Butter
4. Salt to taste

Directions

Bring water to a boil in a medium-sized sauce pan. Add in some salt and butter to taste in the boiling water and let this dissolve and melt. Then, gradually add the flour while stirring with a wooden spoon. The mixture will start to begin to harden pretty fast, so be careful not to add too much. At this phase of cooking, you want a goopy thick mixture, but thin enough so you can continue to stir to get all the lumps out.

After reaching a semi-firm, yet flexible texture, grab a baking pan or any large, deep plate, and pour the mixture in. Be sure that this plate is wet or greased so that the mixture does not stick to the bottom. Let this cool completely while it firms up for the last time. Once it's cooled you can enjoy it as is, topped with some butter or shredded cheese. Or, you can take it to another level of deliciousness.



When your funchi is firm enough, cut it into strips (size is up to you). Heat up some oil in a pan and fry those babies up! After frying, you can top it with some cheese or enjoy it with your favorite dipping sauce.

Note: We recommend the FUNCHI FRESKU polenta flour brand that is sold in all supermarkets on the island. You can also use yellow corn flour from the brand PAN. □

Photo credit of fried funchi sticks: Jacqueline Felida on Pinterest.

Important notice about Aruba Today's Facebook page

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today would like to inform our dear readers that our Facebook page is currently experiencing technical difficulties.

Our technical staff is working on the issue; in the mean time we would like to invite our readers to head on over to our website www.arubatoday.com to get your daily reading fix. We at Aruba Today apologize for this inconvenience and hope that this minor issue will be resolved soon. Thank you dear readers for your support!



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Why Oceanfront Condo Prices in Aruba Are Set to Skyrocket



Imagine waking up every morning to the sound of gentle waves and stepping onto white sandy beaches under the Caribbean sun. This dream is not just a reality for those lucky enough to own an oceanfront condo in Aruba—it's also an investment opportunity that's about to become even more lucrative.

The Caribbean has long been a haven for those seeking an escape from the cold, offering an unbeatable mix of stunning landscapes, warm weather, and a relaxed lifestyle. From December to April, the region bursts with life as snowbirds flock to its shores, transforming the Caribbean into a vibrant, sun-soaked paradise. During these months, average temperatures range from 76°F in the Bahamas to a perfect 83°F in Aruba, making it a top destination for winter getaways. But what's really driving the market now is the shift to hybrid working, which allows people to extend their stays from a few weeks to several months. This trend is redefining how and where people choose to live, and

the Caribbean—Aruba in particular—is reaping the benefits.

Since 2019, the prime residential property market across the Caribbean has seen steady growth, even in the face of a global pandemic. Buyers are increasingly seeking out second homes or retirement spots, willing to pay top dollar for a slice of paradise. Prices for luxury properties range dramatically—from \$650 per square foot for off-beach villas in Antigua to a staggering \$2,780 per square foot for beachfront villas in the Cayman Islands.

So, why is Aruba the place to watch? Beyond its world-renowned beaches, safe environment, and solid infrastructure, several factors suggest that prices for oceanfront condos and homes are set to climb even higher.

Limited Supply, Surging Demand

The Aruban government has placed a moratorium on new condo developments, restricting the supply of new properties at a time when demand is skyrocketing. Tourist numbers are on the

rise, expected to jump from just over 1 million in 2022 to more than 1.4 million by 2024. Many of these visitors are not just tourists—they're potential buyers. With little oceanfront land left to develop, the laws of supply and demand suggest that prices will only continue to rise. North American buyers, in particular, are snapping up beachfront properties, driving prices higher as available inventory dwindles.

Aruba's Prices Are a Bargain—For Now

Compared to other top-tier beach destinations, Aruba's luxury condos are currently a steal:

- The Bahamas: \$735-\$2,000/sq-ft
- Antigua & Barbuda: \$665-\$1,250/sq-ft
- Barbados: \$750-\$1,400/sq-ft
- Cayman Islands: \$1,140-\$2,780/sq-ft
- Turks & Caicos: \$1,100-\$1,500/sq-ft
- Ft. Lauderdale, FL: \$800-\$1,100/sq-ft
- Aruba: \$600-\$800/sq-ft

But this won't last. As the market tightens and demand continues to surge, Aruba's prices are expected to rise sharply, bringing them more in line with other premium Caribbean islands. Expect to see more multi-million dollar homes hit the market as the island becomes an increasingly attractive option for affluent buyers.

Appealing to High-Income Visitors

Aruba is gearing up to welcome more affluent visitors, with the opening of a new St. Regis hotel in late 2024 and a refurbishment of the Hyatt under new ownership. These developments signal a shift towards a higher-end market, much like what's been seen in the Turks & Caicos and the Cayman Islands. While Aruba's diverse appeal will remain, the influx of wealthier tourists is likely to boost demand for luxury real estate, driving prices even higher.

Robust Rental Returns

For many buyers, owning a piece of the Caribbean isn't just about having a dream vacation home—it's also a savvy investment. The rental market in Aruba remains strong, especially as tourism continues to bounce back post-pandemic. With the rise of longer stays due to remote working, rental returns are likely to grow, making ownership even more attractive. Whether you're looking to rent out your property during the high season or enjoy it yourself, the potential for strong rental income is yet another reason why investing in Aruba's oceanfront condos makes sense.

Conclusion: The Time to Invest Is Now

Aruba's prime residential market is on the cusp of significant growth. The island's appeal—a combination of natural beauty, safety, strong infrastructure, and an inviting climate—combined with limited supply and increasing demand, is setting the stage for a surge in oceanfront condo prices. With prices still low compared to other Caribbean hotspots, now is the time to invest. Don't wait too long—Aruba's oceanfront condos are poised to become some of the most coveted real estate in the Caribbean. □

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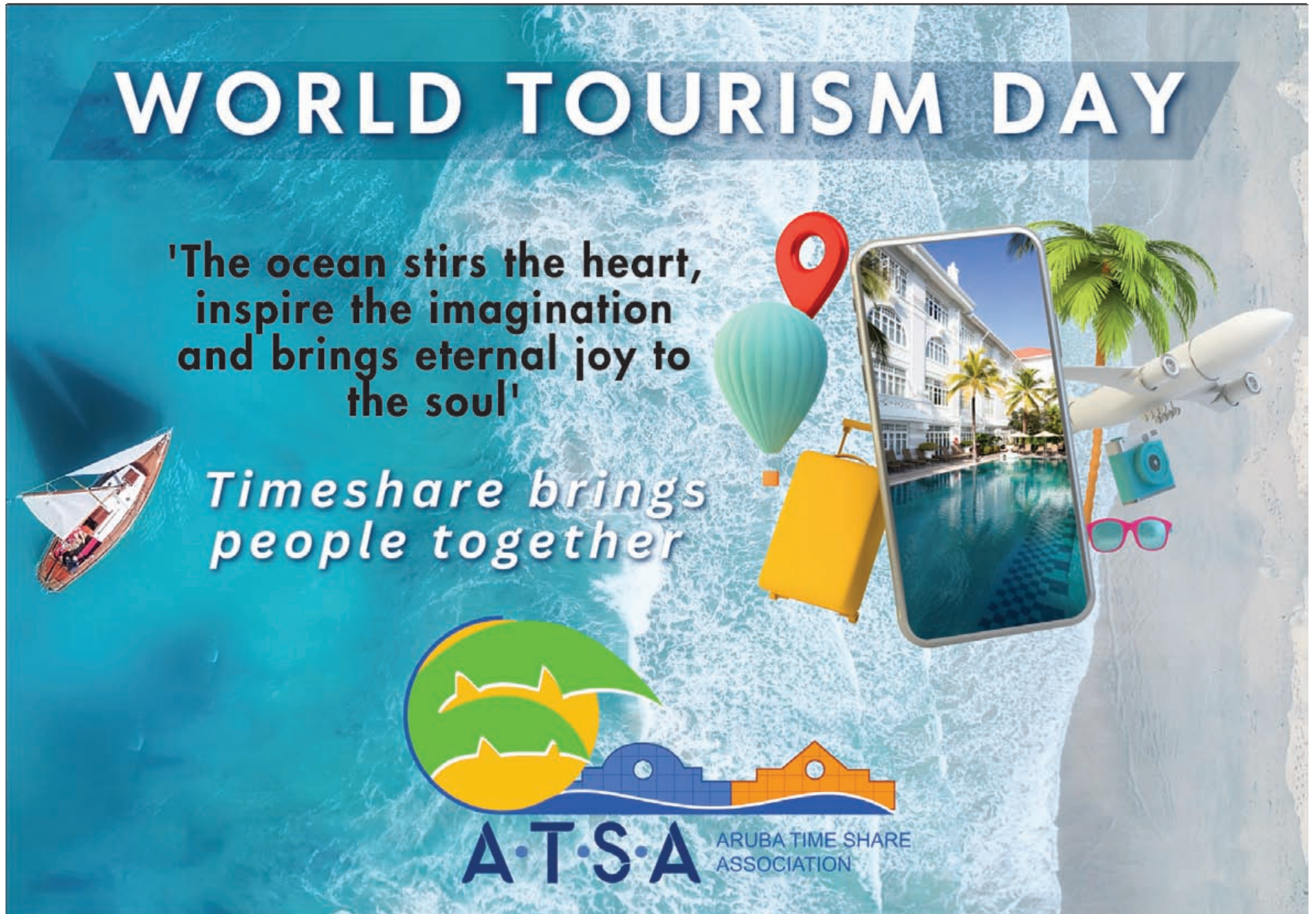
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Aruba's most family-friendly beaches

(Oranjestad)—One of the biggest concerns that parents have when travelling with their children is a guarantee of their safety and healthy enjoyment. Therefore, we thought it would be a great help to travelling parents to list off some of the most family-friendly beaches around the island.

Baby Beach in San Nicolas
Baby Beach is one of Aruba's most popular and visited beaches, and for good reason: This sandy and quiet lagoon is a great place for parents to sit back and relax while their children play in the shallow shores of the beach. Beside the relaxing atmosphere, there are also several services that may accommodate your stay, like a parking lot, sun tent rentals, chairs, bathrooms and a snack bar right at the far left of the beach.

Mangel Halto in Pos Chiquito

Mangel Halto is situated in

the back streets of the Pos Chiquito city. Though there are several stairs on the sides of the beach cliff leading you down, the best spot for families to hang out is across the bridge, passed the mangrove trees near the entrance sign. Here, there are small and big palapas, perfect for big and small families

to set up their belongings. In this area, the shore is also shallow, falling right around your knee before slowly getting deeper: perfect for kids to safely play.

Eagle Beach/Palm Beach in the hotel area

Yet another highly popular beach site, Eagle Beach and

Palm Beach is where most of our visitors go to tan, swim or play in the white sand. Because they are near the low-rise and high-rise hotel areas, these beaches are the most accessible for visitors on foot. These beaches also offer many palapas free to use, but you can also rent chairs and tents. Much like

Baby Beach, these sites are one of the best beaches for your children to play and build sand castles.

Boca Catalina in Malmok

Boca Catalina is a small bay beach near the Malmok beach area further down the hotel areas. Though it may not be a very sandy beach, it is relatively quiet and tranquil. This is a great place for family to lay down a big blanket and have a little picnic. This is also one of the best places to snorkel, as this area is filled with little fish and corals, even close to the shore.

Palm Island

Ok, this one is technically not a beach, but a must-visit attraction for family fun. This small water park oasis is located further down the Mangel Halto Beach and is reachable by boat. This water park offers 6 hours of fun activities, food, drinks, and a chance to see pink flamingoes up close! □



The Casino Aruba at Hilton to Host The Caribbean Poker Series 2024: A Premier Poker Event in Paradise



Aruba— The Casino Aruba at Hilton is delighted to announce that it will be the official host of The Caribbean Poker Series, taking place from September 26 to October 6, 2024. This highly anticipated event will bring together poker enthusiasts from across the globe for 11 days of thrilling competition, highlighted by 16 Rings tournaments.

The Caribbean Poker Series offers an extraordinary blend of high-stakes poker, entertainment, and the chance to unwind in one of the world's most beautiful destinations. Against the breathtaking backdrop of Aruba's sun-kissed beaches and vibrant culture, players will experience

an unparalleled poker tournament. Whether you're a seasoned pro or new to the game, this event offers something for everyone, with opportunities to win prestigious prizes and make unforgettable memories.

To further enhance the experience, The Casino Aruba at Hilton has teamed up with several hotels and resorts in the Palm Beach area to offer exclusive room rates for players. Guests can look forward to luxurious accommodations, all within easy reach of the gaming action.

For more information on the event schedule, registration, or to inquire about players' room

rates, please contact our dedicated travel specialist, Bridget Stein. Bridget is available via email at bridget.stein@tcaruba.com or by phone at +1 (561) 716-7074.

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Stay updated by visiting www.caribbeanpokerseries.com.



Alto Vista chapel and its link to Aruba's origins

According to *Etnia Nativa*, in the 18th century most of the inhabitants of Aruba were indigenous who lived on the north coast, one of the largest communities lived in Alto Vista.

As they were very religious, they had a chief with the name of Antonio Silvester who guided them in the Christian life and it was he who decided to build a stone chapel with a roof of corn rods, which would serve as a place of prayer.

In 1750 it was blessed by Father Algamesi who came from Coro-Venezuela and appointed Domingo Antonio Silvester as the island's first prosecutor in the name of the Spanish crown and Rome. In 1752 the prosecution passed into the hands of Antonio Silvester's son-in-law, Miguel Álvarez, who continued to guide the parishioners in their prayers.

According to the book, *The History of Alto Vista* by R.H. Nooyen, it is not known when

Domingo Antonio Silvester came to Aruba from Venezuela. The elders believe Antonio was a Spaniard. In 1780, father Joseph Antonio de la Vegal called Bernardino Silvester, one of Antonio's sons with his wife Anna Cathalina Tromp, "neighbors and naturals of the island Aruba" and thus they became natives.

At the end of the eighteen century many inhabitants the island died as a result of the black fever epidemic and since people believed that the Alto Vista area was the most infected, they began to build their homes further south within the Noord area, so the town of Noord began to grow into a community till getting its own Church. However religious festivals continued to be celebrated at this sacred native place, with the custom of arriving in procession to Alto Vista.

Two-hundred years after the beautiful time of Alto Vista,

people can no longer see much of the town of Alto Vista from 1750. With a lot of work they found the old foundations of the Church of the Queen of the Holiest Rosary to build a new chapel on the same place. The entire surrounding area was empty and desolated, making it hard to imagine that Alto Vista was a town at all. A hundred years later, people can see the remains of around twenty houses, some made of stone and others of clay. Nowadays, only around six of these houses remain.

South of the chapel in the yard two graves can be observed, there was the cemetery which father Pablo de Algamesi blessed. It is not certain, but it is believed that the two graves belong to Antonio Silvester and Miguel Alvares, according to Nooyen. About 50 meters near the chapel there are still the markings of an old house, where Antonio and



Bernardino Silvester would have lived. About 200 meters from the chapel there is a water tank which the locals call Tanki Cacique. In the past this tank was closed. But mostly water was brought out from the Poz di Noord, a well dug in the sand.

The chapel can be viewed from basically any point in the north side, even from Paradera and Sero Plat. All the historical remains around the chapel provide us with an idea on how the old people of Alto Vista used to live. Don't miss the opportunity to visit a place of historical significance with a window to Aruba's past. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Vodka cocktail
- 6 Day in Hollywood
- 11 Stream
- 12 Rodeo rope
- 13 Blitzen's boss
- 14 Mischievous
- 15 Commentary piece
- 17 Chiding sound
- 18 Clan-destine networks
- 22 Kaffiyeh wearer
- 23 Fine point
- 27 Cockpit worker
- 29 Stylishly quaint
- 30 Lipstick mishaps
- 32 Resting on
- 33 Some Washington urbanites
- 35 Drake's music
- 38 Victories
- 39 Customary
- 41 Skydiving need
- 45 Following
- 46 Is fond of
- 47 Spud
- 48 Fencing swords

DOWN

- 1 "60 Minutes" network
- 2 Singer Rita
- 3 Abel, to Adam
- 4 Water vessel
- 5 Giraffe's cousin
- 6 Water vessel
- 7 Squeak stopper
- 8 Water vessel
- 9 "How sweet —!"
- 10 Went under
- 16 Finish
- 18 Easy targets
- 19 Prudish

A	C	T	O	R		O	P	A	R	T
P	R	O	V	E		N	A	C	H	O
P	A	G	A	N		E	X	C	O	N
A	N	G	L	E	S		O	D	E	
L	I	E		W	A	V	E	R	E	D
L	A	D		A	M	E	N	D	S	
			T	B	O	N	D			
	T	W	E	L	V	E		A	W	E
B	E	A	D	E	A	R		L	E	E
E	A	R			R	A	S	C	A	L
A	M	B	L	E		B	L	O	K	E
R	U	L	E	R		L	I	V	E	R
S	P	E	A	R		E	D	E	N	S

Saturday's answer

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 20 New Haven school | 35 Reddish brown |
| 21 Water vessel | 36 Largest continent |
| 24 "— boy!" | 37 Fourth-down play |
| 25 Magnetic metal | 40 Highest card |
| 26 Cuts off | 42 Luau instrument |
| 28 Water vessel | 43 Golf peg |
| 31 Biol. or geol. | 44 Twisty turn |
| 34 Husband of une tante | |

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11						12			
13						14			
			15		16			17	
18	19	20				21			
22				23		24	25	26	
27				28		29			
30				31		32			
			33		34				
35	36	37		38					
39			40		41	42	43	44	
45					46				
47					48				

3-4

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-4 CRYPTOQUOTE

VDH VK Z AUXHC PLOZA, VDL

RZHG OAOLFOX KVL Z BGUNO,

HGOI ENVXOX BUHGUI Z

PLOZA. — OLIOXH PVBXVI

Saturday's Cryptoquote: ALL CATS LOVE FISH BUT FEAR TO WET THEIR PAWS. — WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Cruise ship Schedule: October 01 - 13 2024

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH		
TUE	01	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1	
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1	
WED	02	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	21.00	C	1	
THU	03	WORLD EXPLORER	08.00	23.59	C	1	
SUN	06	FREEWINDS - DEPT.	****	22.15	E	-	
TUE	08	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	B	1	
		CARNIVAL VISTA	13.00	23.00	I	1	
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1	
SUN	13	FREEWINDS - DEPT.	****	22.15	E	-	

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

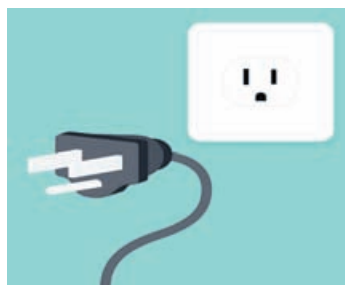
lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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24/7

Google expert at antitrust trial says government underestimates competition for online ad dollars

By **MATTHEW BARAKAT**
AP Business Writer

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) —

Federal regulators who say Google holds an illegal monopoly over the technology that matches online advertisers to publishers are vastly underestimating the competition the tech giant faces, an expert hired by Google testified Thursday. Mark Israel, an economist who prepared an expert report on Google's behalf, said the government's claims that Google holds a monopoly over advertising technology are improperly focused on a narrow market the government defines as "open web display advertising," essentially the rectangular ads that appear on the top and along the right hand side of a web page when a consumer browses the web on a desktop computer.

But the government's case fails to account for a variety of competition that occurs beyond those rectangular boxes, Israel said. In the real world, advertisers have dramatically shifted where they spend money to social media companies like Facebook and TikTok, and online retailers like Amazon.

When you account for all online display advertising, not just the narrow segment defined by the government's case, Google gets just 10% of the U.S. market share as of 2022, he said. That's down from roughly 15% a decade ago.

In addition, advertisers have moved away from placing their ads on the screens of desktop and laptop computers where Google is alleged to control the market, with money migrating to ads placed on apps and mobile device screens. Israel cited marketing data showing display ad spending on desktop and laptop devices has decreased from 71% in 2013 to 17% in 2022.

The government's case "seems to miss where the competition is today," Israel said.



The Google building is seen in New York, Feb. 26, 2024.

Associated Press

His testimony comes as Google wraps up its defense in the third week of an antitrust trial that began earlier this month in Alexandria, Virginia. U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema has said she expects the government will put on a short rebuttal case Friday. Then the trial will go on hiatus, with both sides submitting proposed findings of fact in November and returning to court to make closing arguments in December. She said she expects to make a ruling by the end of the year.

The government's case alleges Google has built and maintained an illegal monopoly that restricts choices and inflates costs for online publishers and advertisers. Its control of the market has allowed Google to keep 36 cents on the dollar for every ad

bought and sold through its ad tech stack, the government claims.

The government says Google controls advertising tech at every step of the process, including the predominant technology used by publishers to sell their ad space, the predominant technology used by advertisers looking to purchase ad space, and the ad exchanges in the middle that conduct auctions in a matter of milliseconds to match advertiser to publisher.

The government's case contends that Google illegally ties those markets together, forcing publishers to use Google's technology if they want access to Google's large cache of advertisers.

The government, using more narrow market definitions than those used by

Israel, has claimed that Google controls 91% of the market for publisher ad servers and 87% of the market for advertising ad networks.

Google says the government's case also fails to account for the billions the company has invested to ensure its products, working together, generate better value for publishers and advertisers by matching the right advertisers to the right consumers.

Israel cited data showing publishers working with Google are generating more revenue for each bit of ad space they make available, while advertisers are paying less for each click their ads generate. □

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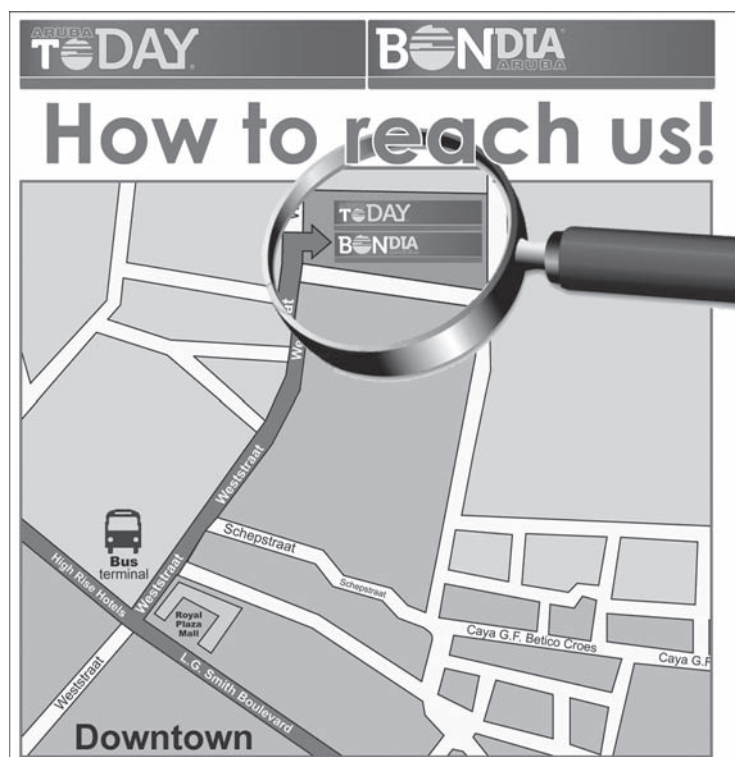
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Derrick Rose, a No. 1 overall pick in 2008 and the 2011 NBA MVP, announces retirement

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

Derrick Rose's last act as an NBA player came in the form of a letter to the game of basketball, addressing the highs and lows that he experienced over a 16-year pro career. And with that, his career ended on his terms. Rose, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2008 NBA draft by his hometown Chicago Bulls and the league's MVP in 2011, announced his retirement on Thursday. He was, and still is, the youngest MVP winner in NBA history, claiming that award when he was just 22.

"You believed in me through the highs and lows, my constant when everything else seemed uncertain," Rose wrote as part of his letter to the game, serving as his retirement announcement. He posted the letter online, as well as taking out full-page newspaper advertisements in each of the cities where he played in his NBA years. "You told me it's okay to say goodbye, reassuring me that you'll always be a part of me, no matter where life takes me," he wrote.

Rose was the league's rookie of the year in 2008-09 for the Bulls, was the league's MVP two seasons later and was an All-Star selection in three of



Memphis Grizzlies guard Derrick Rose stands on the sideline in the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Milwaukee Bucks, Feb. 15, 2024, in Memphis, Tenn.

his first four seasons. A major knee injury during the 2012 playoffs forced him to miss almost two full seasons and he contemplated stepping away from the game several times following other injury issues, but always found ways to get back onto the floor. Bulls owner Jerry Reinsdorf said Rose "represents the grit, resilience, and heart" of Chicago.

"He's one of the toughest and most determined athletes I've ever been around, constantly fighting through

adversity that would have broken most," Reinsdorf said. "Watching him grow from a Chicago Public League star to becoming the youngest MVP in NBA history as a Bull has been nothing short of an honor." Besides the Bulls, Rose would also play for New York, Detroit, Minnesota, Cleveland and Memphis. He spent last season with the Grizzlies, returning to the city that he called home for his one season of college basketball. He played in 24 games with the Grizzlies last

season and when it ended Rose spoke at length about what a return to Memphis meant to him.

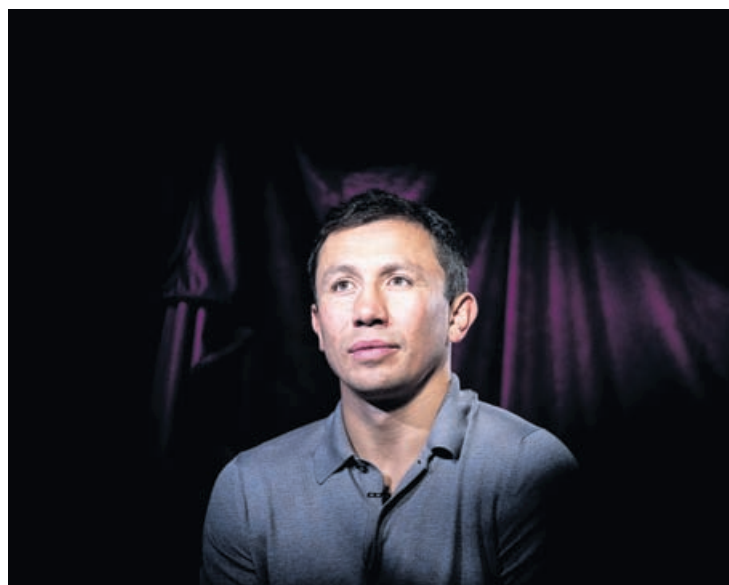
"It's all full circle," Rose said in April. "Coming back here, having my family here, my wife's family is from here, being back in this arena, having some of the people that came to my college games actually come to my professional games here, it's all love." Added the Grizzlies in a statement Thursday where they offered Rose congratulations on his career: "We are

Associated Press

grateful for your meaningful contributions to this team and this city, and wish you all the best in this next chapter of life." Rose dealt with multiple knee surgeries over the years, took time away during the 2017-18 season to contemplate his future while dealing with ankle issues and sat out nearly two full seasons after the knee injury in 2012 when he should have been in his prime. Rose averaged 17.4 points and 5.2 assists in 723 regular-season games. He averaged 21 points per game before the ACL tear 12 years ago, and 15.1 per game in the seasons that followed.

"With D-Rose, it was never a question of his talent," Basketball Hall of Famer Dwyane Wade, a former Rose teammate, said in 2018. "It was always about his health. And when he was healthy, everyone saw all the talent." Rose still flashed that MVP-level talent plenty of times over the years that followed the knee troubles. He had a career-high 50 points for Minnesota in a 128-125 win over Utah on Oct. 31, 2018 a game that moved him to tears. He had a 12-assist game for Detroit in a 115-107 win over Houston on Dec. 14, 2019, his first such game in nearly eight years. □

Ex-champ Golovkin takes leading role in group aiming to save boxing's Olympic status



Boxer Gennadiy Golovkin, of Kazakhstan, speaks during an interview with The Associated Press, Tuesday, June 28, 2022, in New York.

Associated Press

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — Former world champion Gennadiy Golovkin is taking a leading role in World Boxing, the group aiming to keep the sport on the Olympic program for the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

World Boxing said on Thursday that Golovkin would chair an "Olympic commission" tasked with persuading the International Olympic Committee that the break-away organization founded last year is fit to run the competitions in Los Angeles.

"For me, personally, as well as for all the sports world, it is important to preserve boxing as an Olympic sport, and this will be my top priority," Golovkin said in a statement. "I also intend to work closely with the IOC on issues of boxing's commitment to the Olympic values of honesty, fairness and transparency."

Golovkin won an Olympic silver medal in 2004 and, after turning pro, was a long-

time world middleweight champion who fought in some of the most lucrative bouts of all time, finishing with a 42-2-1 record. Since retirement, he has become president of Kazakhstan's national Olympic committee.

Boxing's Olympic status is uncertain. The IOC has set a deadline of early next year for a credible governing body to be in place after years of turmoil with the International Boxing Association.

The IOC ran the last two Olympic tournaments on its own after first suspending and then banishing the IBA from the Games and has said it no longer wishes to organize the tournament in-house.

World Boxing lists 44 national governing bodies as members including the United States, Britain and India. It most recently added Japan and Algeria, whose federation is home to Paris Olympic gold medalist Imane Khelif. □

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MLB's made a lot of rule changes over the past few years. The most noticeable? A pitch clock

By **DAVID BRANDT**
AP Baseball Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Major League Baseball's rule-change bonanza of 2023 altered a myriad of the game's details, including cutting back extreme infield shifts, bigger bases and limits on how many times a pitcher can disengage from the rubber.

But the thing that's most recognizable is the little pitch clock that is constantly counting down.

"I mean, just looking at kind of the rule changes the past couple years, I think pace of play probably has affected things positively for fans," Guardians outfielder Steven Kwan said. "I can't say that's a guarantee, but that's kind of what jumps out first."

He's not wrong. MLB is enjoying a bit of a renaissance these days with a bump in attendance and



The pitch clock is visible as Baltimore Orioles starting pitcher Dean Kremer winds up to deliver during the sixth inning of a baseball game against the Boston Red Sox, April 24, 2023, in Baltimore, Md.

TV ratings. Fans, players and the game's executives are largely in agreement that the new rules have

made for a more exciting brand of baseball. It feels like there's more action, more quick decisions and

more drama. But a deeper look at the statistics shows that an MLB game is basically the same

as 2022, except for one key detail.

It's about 30 minutes shorter.

Turns out baseball games weren't boring they were just taking too long. Now that the itching, scratching, spitting and lollygagging have been eliminated, 2 1/2-hour games are actually quite a bit of fun.

MLB's initial hope with the rule changes particularly banning extreme infield shifts was that it would provide an offensive spark. But the league-wide batting average (.243 in 2024, .243 in 2022) and scoring average (4.40 in 2024, 4.28 in 2022) are pretty similar.

The difference is that when all the action is condensed into a shorter time frame, it feels like more is happening. The pitch clock mandates that players have 30 seconds to resume play between batters. □

Associated Press



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